



Volunteer Today

March 2001

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SERVING THE PUBLIC

Sal Seanez, Assistant Director, Community Corrections and Detention Division

The impact of volunteerism is felt in many ways. During 2001, the International Year of Volunteers, the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) is pleased to recognize the many contributions made by staff in each of our facilities. Immediately after the nation celebrates National Volunteer Week, many government agencies will have the opportunity to honor the work of their staff during Public Service Recognition Week.

Public Service Recognition Week is a time set aside to educate Americans about the broad variety of services provided by government. It has been celebrated the first Monday through Sunday in May since 1985. We use this time to make sure our neighbors understand our contributions to the community and to the nation.

The most important reason for the week is to celebrate and recognize the invaluable service that the millions of public servants provide to the nation. All too often, the contributions made by America's public employees to our democracy is forgotten not only by the citizenry but even by those of us who serve.

Thousands of hours of exemplary work and community service performed by BOP staff go unrecognized. Many of our employees are driven by the passion of volunteering their time to various charitable and worthy causes in the community in which they live. The contributions

they provide benefit our agency by helping to eradicate stereotypical views of institutions and the criminal justice system. Tasked with the safe and secure operations of our facilities nationwide, staff relocate to these sites and cities where they become concerned citizens who seek to make a difference. For these staff, the fulfillment gained by their participation in these activities serve as their only source of recognition.

As an agency, the BOP is extremely grateful to our staff who perform a valuable public service for the federal government. We are particularly appreciative of those who take it even further by sharing their time and service with many of you in the community.

We encourage you to recognize both those who volunteer as well as the many public servants who serve your communities. In many cases in the BOP, volunteer service has become an extension of our public service.

HATS OFF

Alice DavisJohnson, Administrator, Volunteer Management Branch

Recently, I had the opportunity to spend a week working at the Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) in Memphis, Tennessee. While there, I had the privilege of learning about a most exciting and innovative inmate volunteerism project called "Happy Hats."

The Happy Hats Program at FCI Memphis is a link to the community and has developed into a wonderful relationship between the institution and children who are under chronic care at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis. Happy Hats is a success due to the collective efforts of FCI Memphis staff, inmates, the local Memphis business community and the Volunteer Coordinator for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Mr. C.J. Burti.

The Happy Hats program at Memphis is part of a nationwide effort. The National Happy Hats for Kids was started in 1991, by Sheri Schrier of Rolling Hills Estates California, after losing her younger brother, father and grandmother to cancer. Part of the program's mission statement is "to bring smiles, giggles and laughter to hospitalized children."

At Ms. Schrier's suggestion, Mr. Burti approached Warden J.P. Young at the institution about handling the production of the Happy Hats. Warden Young agreed to have the Happy Hats become a part of the Vocational Training Program. Ms. Peatchola Jones, Supervisor of Education, and Ms. Darlene Glover, GED Teacher, were selected to oversee the operation. Sewing machines and other items needed to make the hats are supplied through donations from the business community.

Ms. Glover teaches fabric and tailoring skills to the inmates as a part of the Apparel Class. The

class started December 6, 1999, and has produced more than 5,000 Happy Hats through the volunteer efforts of more than 200 inmates. Inmates are not compensated for their contributions in making the hats. According to them, giving back to the community is payment enough.

The true impact of the Happy Hats Program cannot be measured by the number of hats produced but rather by the continuous smiles, endless giggles, and never forgetful laughter produced by all of the people involved. Through this project, I certainly learned that smiles, giggles, and laughter are just what the doctor ordered!

VOLUNTEERS AID VICTIMS

Addie Richburg, Program Coordinator, Volunteer Management Branch

In the Department of Justice and to victims of crime, the week of April 22 - 28, 2001, (National Volunteer Week) had additional meaning. This year marked the 21st anniversary of the commemoration of National Crime Victims' Rights Week. The theme this year was "Victims' Rights: Reach for the Stars." Due in greatest part to the energies of volunteerism, many strides have been made in recognizing victims' rights.

In reaching for the stars of safety and justice, crime victims and their advocates, primarily volunteers, have helped not only individuals touched by crime, but entire communities as a whole. They have provided impetus for greater focus on early interventions and crime prevention that result in fewer victimizations.

Many of those who volunteer to assist victims of juvenile offenders have shed light on the considerable need for proactive service. They have begun to convince communities that they have a critical stake and important role in the outcome of youth across America. Through volunteering in juvenile justice environments, they have begun to convince communities that their involvement as volunteers for victims, mentors for at-risk youth and juvenile offenders, and as members of neighborhood safety initiatives can contribute to the safety and well-being of their homes, neighborhoods and schools.

For many years, victim service providers, justice professionals, and community volunteers have joined forces to promote justice and safety for all. This year, we all had and will continue to have the opportunity to shed light on the plight of crime victims and encourage community support to meet victims' needs as we celebrate volunteers.

VOLUNTEERISM AROUND THE NATION

Post-Yuletide Joy

Federal Correctional Institution (FCI), Florence, Colorado

In June 2000, Habitat For Humanity, a Christian ministry that seeks to eliminate substandard housing and homelessness throughout the world, opened their first chapter in Fremont County, Colorado.

To help raise funds for the initial project site in Florence, inmates at the FCI volunteered their time and talents to construct a playhouse that was auctioned off by raffle tickets on December 22, 2000. The playhouse was displayed throughout Fremont County to encourage citizens to purchase \$1.00 raffle tickets. In addition, the playhouse was decorated as a float in Canon City's Christmas Parade of Lights.

The theme of the playhouse was taken from the Harry Potter Children's Series of Magical Happenings. Significant to what is described in the publication, the window from which the owl flies to deliver the mail and the broomsticks on which the children ride were painted on the side of the house.

The hard work volunteered by 17 inmates to build the playhouse paid off. Habitat for Humanity raised \$3,500 for their organization. This money will be used to purchase materials for construction of the first Habitat for Humanity house in Fremont County.

The Groundhog Saw His Shadow

Federal Bureau of Prisons Central Office, Washington, DC

Each year, countless persons anxiously await the groundhog, a small furry creature on which tradition depends to determine the duration of the winter season. The District of Columbia Public Schools have established a new tradition. Instead of awaiting the groundhog to reveal himself, students become shadows of governmental and private organizational staff to increase their general knowledge and interest in a variety of career fields.

On Friday, February 2, 2001, BOP staff mentors from the Central Office hosted seven students from District of Columbia Public Schools. Four freshman from Spingarn Senior High and three seniors from Calvin Coolidge Senior High participated in this program.

Students shadowed Connie Barner, Secretary of Safety Branch; Michael Brown, Information Technology Specialist in the Computer Services Branch; Alice DavisJohnson, Administrator of the Volunteer Management Branch; Matthew Hamidullah, Ombudsman, Office of the Director; Rita Hardy-Thompson, Community Program Specialist in Privatization and Special Projects Branch; Brian Pownall, Executive Assistant in Health Services Division, and Dr. Neil Walker, Diversity Management Administrator in Affirmative Action Branch.

The students were treated to a working lunch sponsored by the DC Chapter of the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice (NABCJ). At this event, other BOP staff spoke about their career paths with the BOP and the importance of pursuing an education. According to the high school career coordinators, students are already expressing their desire to shadow BOP staff next year. For more information about job shadowing, [visit their website](#).

Inmates Stitch for Love

Metropolitan Detention Center - Chicago, Illinois

A program called "Stitches for Love", has been initiated with female offenders at the Metropolitan Correctional Center (MCC) Chicago, Illinois. The program is designed to encourage female inmates to donate their completed crochet products such as slippers, hats, wraps and afghans to South View Manor Home for the Elderly. This is a skilled and intermediate care facility for convalescence, nursing, rehabilitation, and retirement.

Patricia Crowley, a volunteer at the institution for over twenty years, contributes her time to work with the offenders on this program. She indicates that she finds the program to be very rewarding.

During the past ten years, she has implemented a volunteer program at her church through which yarn is collected and then used to teach the inmates how to crochet. Ms. Crowley mails the donated yarn to staff at the institution each week for distribution to the inmates on Sundays. Twice each year, on Christmas and Mother's Day, completed items are collected and donated to the South View Manor for the Elderly.

The inmates look forward to receiving the yarn and are very excited about their creations. Many of the females have never crocheted. By watching others, they have been able to make beautiful slippers, hats, and wraps.

The program helps to provide a community service to the elderly and allows inmates to give something back to the community.